Realizing Our Potential

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy
2014 Annual Report

Ontario

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Minister's Message

Deb Matthews
Deputy Premier
President of the
Treasury Board
Minister Responsible for the
Poverty Reduction Strategy

We know there is great potential in everyone. Given the opportunity, and the right supports, every Ontarian can realize their full potential, contribute to the community in which they live and participate in a prosperous and healthy Ontario.

As President of the Treasury Board and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, I'm honoured and proud to be leading this important work to reduce poverty in Ontario. It is no easy task, but at the end of the day there is no greater reward than knowing that we are making an impact in the lives of our most vulnerable people.

In September 2014, we launched our renewed, refocused effort to reduce poverty. Our second five-year strategy, *Realizing Our Potential*, is grounded in the understanding that as communities, cities and as a province we are all better off when all of us have the opportunity to reach our full potential.

I'm proud of the progress we have made so far and the positive impact we will make over the next five years. Building on the success of our first strategy, *Breaking the Cycle*, our focus will be on integrating our efforts across government to deliver programs and services that matter to people. We will focus on programs that are grounded in evidence and that we know make a difference in reducing poverty. We will continue to break the cycle of poverty for children and youth, focus on employment and income security, and move forward on our bold goal to end homelessness.

As President of the Treasury Board, I know how important reducing poverty and homelessness is to the province. Given the high cost of poverty and homelessness to both the government and to the economy, investments we make in reducing poverty can mean savings down the road as people are healthier, better educated, more ready for employment and better able to be fully enagaged citizens in their communities. Our government understands that creating opportunity for Ontario's most vulnerable people goes hand-in-hand with our need to be fiscally responsible.

"We know there is great potential in everyone. Given the opportunity, and the right supports, every Ontarian can realize their full potential, contribute to the community in which they live and participate in a prosperous and healthy Ontario."

I want to express my sincere thanks to the individual members and community groups that were part of the Technical Advisory Group, who provided valuable input as we developed our second poverty reduction strategy. This group represents a wide variety of advocacy groups, policy institutes, municipalities, youth organizations and social justice charities, and their expertise, insights and personal experience were invaluable. I would also like to recognize my predecessor, Teresa Piruzza, my colleagues on the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion, and the many individuals who participated in consultations on the second strategy.

As we lift each person and each family out of poverty, we lift up our communities and our province to achieve our full potential.

Sincerely,

Deb Matthews

Deb Matthews
Deputy Premier
President of the Treasury Board
Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy

Introduction

In 2008, the government released its first five-year poverty reduction strategy, *Breaking the Cycle*. The strategy focused on Ontario's children and youth, with the target of reducing the number of children living in poverty and better educational attainment.

Since then, the government has made real progress. Today, a single parent with two young children, working a full-time minimum wage job, has an income of over $34,000 a year — up from less than $20,000 in 2003 — and can benefit from full-day kindergarten, the Ontario Child Benefit, children's dental benefits and child care subsidies. We have made a good start but we know that we can do more.

Our government is committed to ensuring that funding goes towards programs that work and reporting on the government's progress towards reaching our poverty reduction goals. In 2014, we moved forward with renewed efforts to prevent and reduce poverty with the launch of the second strategy, *Realizing Our Potential*. To inform this strategy we commissioned research, consulted with the Technical Advisory Group, and travelled across the province to hear Ontarians' perspectives on poverty reduction. In the new strategy we are focusing on four key pillars: continuing to break the cycle of poverty for children and youth, moving towards employment and income security for vulnerable groups, ending homelessness and investing in what works by using evidence to measure success.

As part of our evidence-based decision making, the first poverty reduction strategy laid out eight indicators to measure our progress, including income levels, education, health, housing and standard of living. We have made progress on all eight indicators, and based on feedback we heard from Ontarians during the consultations in 2013, we have added three new indicators to the new strategy, which measure the percentage of youth and young adults not in education, employment or training, long-term unemployment and poverty rates of vulnerable populations.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty for Children and Youth

"For many vulnerable children, **Student Nutrition Programs** ensure a healthy start to each school day. It's heartwarming, not only to see these children enjoying a healthy morning meal, but also to see parent volunteers working side by side with each other, proudly contributing what they can. When children are able to start the day with a nutritious meal they are better able to take advantage of the education they so deserve."

– Catherine Parsonage, Executive Director and CEO, Toronto Foundation for Student Success

Our children are our future. We must invest in their potential if we are going to break the cycle of poverty for Ontario families. That means ensuring that they get the best start in life through strategic investments in education, health care and community supports.

We have made steady progress towards meeting our target of **reducing child poverty by 25 per cent**. Between 2008 and 2011, we lifted 47,000 children and their families out of poverty. We also prevented 61,000 children and their families from falling into poverty. We know there is more to do and we will continue to build on our progress to improve the everyday lives of children and their families.

Key Achievements in 2014:

- Increased the **Ontario Child Benefit** to a maximum annual benefit of **$1,310 per child** under 18. Starting in July 2015, we will index it to the Ontario Consumer Price Index to help families keep up with inflation.
- Provided more than **$1 billion in annual child care funding**, double the amount of funding provided in 2003-04.
- Passed the **Child Care Modernization Act, 2014** in December. This bill will strengthen oversight of the unlicensed child care sector, increase capacity in the licensed child care sector, and make information more readily available to parents and the public about daycare options and regulations.
- Implemented 190 new **Student Nutrition Programs** reaching approximately 31,000 more children and youth with a nutritious breakfast at school and enhanced supports to approximately 300 existing programs, bringing the total to 756,800 students served, an increase of over 300 per cent since the 2004-05 school year.
- Launched a First Nations-led planning process to develop Student Nutrition Programs in on-reserve educational settings.

- Expanded income eligibility for **Healthy Smiles Ontario** – our low-income dental benefit program for children and youth. As of April 1, 2014, approximately 70,000 more children and youth were eligible to receive dental services.
- Completed the roll-out of **Full-Day Kindergarten** in publicly funded schools, saving families, on average, $6,500 per year in child care costs. By the end of the 2014-15 school year, more than 470,000 children will have benefitted from Full-Day Kindergarten.
- Provided $93 million in new annual funding for **mental health services and supports**, which helped more than 55,000 children and their families access mental health services and supports.
- Launched the **Tele-Mental Health Service** to provide expanded access to specialized mental health consultation services to children and youth in rural, remote and underserviced communities. Through an annual investment of $3.9 million, this service is available in 35 communities with the greatest need and is expected to provide more than 2,800 psychiatric consultations in 2014-15.

- Supported postsecondary students from low- to middle-income families through the **Ontario Student Assistance Program**. Today, students are playing less for undergraduate university programs than they would have 10 years ago, and they have more access to financial assistance. For example, in 2014-15, a university student from a family earning $50,000 annually would receive more than $14,800 in assistance, of which $7,500 is grants that they do not have to repay. In 2003-04, this student would have received approximately $11,500 in assistance, of which only $3,700 would have been non-repayable grants. Today, they are receiving $3,300 more and have to repay less.
- Thirty-four high schools across the province participated in the **Urban and Priority High Schools Initiative**, helping to provide students with nutrition programs, after-school activities, leadership training and financial assistance.
- Expanded the **Youth-in-Transition Worker Program**, supporting youth when they leave foster care. In total there are now 60 workers across the province, including 19 for Aboriginal youth.

Moving Forward:

We will continue to promote the health and well-being of our children, raise achievement in our schools, remove barriers and create more opportunities for our vulnerable youth. Through strategic investments, we will strive to help each child and youth reach their full potential.

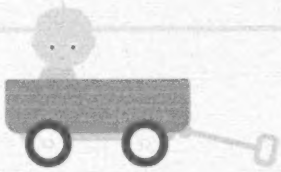
Moving forward, we will:

- Improve student achievement and well-being of Ontario's First Nations, Métis and Inuit students through the **Aboriginal Education Strategy**, with the goal of closing the achievement gap between Aboriginal students and all students.
- Complete the expansion of the **Student Nutrition Program** into an additional 150 schools across Ontario and work with First Nations partners to implement programs in on-reserve educational settings.
- Build on the work of the Healthy Smiles Ontario program and **expand health benefits to children and youth in low-income families** so that more kids have access to additional health benefits including prescription drugs, assistive devices, vision care and mental health services.
- Increase funding to allow all 72 school boards to participate in the **Summer Learning Program**, offering approximately 550 classes that combine engaging mathematics and literacy learning with recreational activities for approximately 8,250 students at risk of "summer learning loss" in disadvantaged communities. This program will also expand to include classes for students up to Grade 5; currently the program ends after Grade 3.
- Continue to increase the **30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant** annually for students in university and college, based on the average allowable increase in tuition fees.

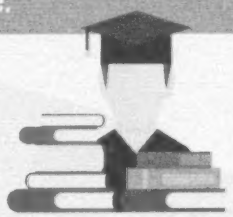
- **Call on the federal government** to be a partner in reducing poverty in Ontario, and to invest in programs and services where there is still an overwhelming need. While the federal government's recent announcement on enhancements to the Universal Child Care Benefit is welcome and will help families across Ontario, there is more to be done. We will continue to work with the federal government to increase the National Child Benefit Supplement and support greater access to quality child care and early years services in Ontario through a national child care program.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty for Children and Youth

Investing in education, public health and our communities to give our children the best start in life.



Increased maximum annual **Ontario Child Benefit** to **$1,310** per child.



30% Off Tuition Grant is saving families up to **$1,780** a year

$1 billion annually in **child care** funding

Invested **$4.2 million** for the **Youth-in-Transition Worker Program**, including 19 workers for Aboriginal youth

Full-day kindergarten is **saving families $6,500** a year

Served **756,800 students** through the **Student Nutrition Program**

Offered **343 classes** through the **Summer Learning Program**

70,000 more children and youth can receive dental services through **Healthy Smiles Ontario**

$93 million in new annual funding for **mental health supports**, benefitting **55,000 children**

Passed the **Child Care Modernization Act, 2014** which will increase access to before- and after-school care

Launched the **Tele-Mental Health Service: 2,800 psychiatric consultations** in rural and remote communities

Moving Towards Employment and Income Security

For many people, employment is the way out of poverty and the path to a secure future. A meaningful, stable job provides confidence and builds hope for the future. We will continue to support working families, invest in opportunities for our youth and help connect the most vulnerable to employment.

Key Achievements in 2014:

- Continued annual increases for people receiving **Ontario Works** and **Ontario Disability Support Program** benefits. In addition to annual increases in rates, since 2013 we have increased support by $50 per month (about eight per cent) for single adults without children receiving Ontario Works, guided by the advice of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, led by Frances Lankin and Munir A. Sheikh.
- Replaced the Northern Allowance with the **Remote Communities Allowance**. This new allowance provides $50 more per month for individuals and families than the previous allowance, plus an additional $25 for each family member. Together with social assistance increases, that is an increase of 13 per cent since 2013 for a single person without children receiving Ontario Works and living in a remote community.
- **Increased the minimum wage to $11 per hour** and indexed it to the Ontario Consumer Price Index, helping families keep up with the changing costs of living.
- Helped more than 26,500 young people find jobs, get training and gain valuable work experiences through the **Youth Employment Fund** since 2013. Eighty-five per cent of recipients went on to further training or employment following their job placements.
- **Employment Ontario** helped more than 684,000 Ontarians find and keep jobs through access to job search, matching, placement and training supports at more than 400 locations across the province.

- Continued to move forward with **integrating employment and training services** to ensure that people can access support services more effectively and transition to stable employment, including targeting resources to those who need them most, such as individuals receiving social assistance, persons with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, Aboriginal Peoples, newcomers and at-risk youth.
- Launched the **Aboriginal Economic Development Fund** to provide grants and financing to Aboriginal businesses, communities and organizations. The fund helps promote economic development and improve outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples.
- Created 29 new jobs and maintained 54 jobs for Métis resource-sector entrepreneurs and businesses by providing funding to the **Métis Voyageur Development Fund**.

Successfully Transitioning From Ontario Works To Full-Time Employment

Maya,* 41, is a mom of three children whose husband was suddenly unable to work. Despite her challenges and bouts of depression, Maya knew that she needed to get back into the workforce.

Through the Augmented Education Initiative, a program offered in partnership between George Brown College and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and funded by the Ontario government, Maya was able to complete the Construction Craft Worker Extended Training.

During the program Maya became a top student. She was motivated, dependable and reliable, and as her confidence grew, she exemplified self-awareness and leadership. These qualities paid huge dividends for Maya as she began her work placement at a local construction company. Maya was hired shortly after beginning her placement, and has been working for over a year.

Maya was supported by Ontario Works for a year and through access to training was able to find full-time employment to prevent herself and her family from falling into poverty.

Maya is Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy in action.

*Name has been changed

Achieving Employment: Employment Ontario

A member of a First Nations community outside of Thunder Bay, David* worked in the film and TV industry in Western Canada before returning to Thunder Bay to be closer to his family. After returning home, David found there were fewer media industry opportunities available in a much smaller community, and as a result was at risk of poverty. With the help of the Employment Ontario service provider, YES Employment Services, and the Youth Employment Fund, he was able to obtain a job as a guide for a tourism operator and eventually put his media skills to work in the company's marketing department. Steady employment has helped David avoid poverty.

David is Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy in action.

*Name has been changed

Moving Forward:

We will continue to focus our resources on those who need them most, including those receiving social assistance, persons with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, Aboriginal Peoples, newcomers and at-risk youth, to help them access the supports they need to become and stay employed. We are also taking steps to provide today's workers with the retirement income security they deserve.

Moving forward, we will:

- Leverage the two-year $295 million investment in the **Ontario Youth Jobs Strategy**, helping to connect youth with the tools, experience and entrepreneurial support they need to find employment or start their own businesses.
- Reform **Ontario's social assistance system** to remove barriers and increase opportunities for everyone to participate in the workforce.
- Take a leadership role to strengthen the retirement income system. Work is underway to develop the **Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP)**, a first-of-its-kind provincial pension that is intended to provide a predictable source of retirement income for working Ontarians. The ORPP will be introduced in 2017.
- Work with the Ontario Energy Board to develop the **Ontario Electricity Support Program**, which is being designed to provide ongoing assistance to eligible low-income electricity customers directly on their bills, ensuring they continue to have support after the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit comes to an end on December 31, 2015.
- Work towards **closing the wage gap** between **registered early childhood educators** working in public schools and those in licensed child care centres. In January 2015, the government implemented a wage enhancement for child care program staff in all licensed child care centres and licensed private-home day care agencies, including in First Nations communities. To support this initiative, the government is providing an additional $269 million over three years to support a wage increase of $1 per hour plus up to 17.5 per cent in benefits in 2015 and a further increase in 2016 for eligible workers.

- Increase the hourly wage of publicly funded **personal support workers (PSWs)** who work in home and community settings by $4 over the next three years. Ontario is also setting a new base wage for these PSWs, which will increase alongside the hourly wage, to $16.50/hour by April 1, 2016. The government is also providing $200 million to support low-wage frontline workers in the community and developmental services sectors in the coming years.
- **Call on the federal government** to make further enhancements to the Working Income Tax Benefit to support working low-income Ontarians.

Moving Towards Employment and Income Security

Providing a way out of poverty and a path to a secure future

Vulnerable Groups

Supported **83 jobs** through the **Métis Voyageur Development Fund**

Integrating employment and training services to ensure access for those who need them most

Increased support for those receiving **Ontario Works** and **Ontario Disability Support Program** benefits, helping more than **900,000 adults and children** every day

Increased the **Remote Communities Allowance** ($25-$50 per person per month)

Individuals and Families

Increased minimum wage to **$11/hour** and indexed it to the Consumer Price Index

Helped more than 684,000 Ontarians find jobs and training through **400 Employment Ontario locations**

Increasing wages for registered **early childhood educators** by **$1/hour** and for **personal support workers** by **$4/hour**.

Youth

Invested **$295 million** over two years in the **Youth Jobs Strategy** to help connect **30,000 youth** with tools, experiences and entrepreneurial support

Ending Homelessness in Ontario

We have all heard the saying, "There's no place like home." A home provides a stable foundation that helps people rise out of poverty. Yet today, many Ontarians do not have access to a safe and affordable home and the protection, stability and a sense of belonging that a home provides. Homelessness prevents many people from fully participating in society and realizing their full potential. Homelessness is also costly for our economy, and investing in supportive and affordable housing today means savings down the road.

That's why we have set an ambitious goal to end homelessness in Ontario. We know that achieving this goal will not be easy, especially in the current economic and fiscal environment, but it is the right thing to do.

Affordable Housing Changes Lives

Yousef* had been homeless in London ***for 15 years***. In a single year, he made 259 visits to the hospital, and had 108 encounters with the police. Since being housed a year ago, he has visited the hospital twice and had six encounters with the police.

Yousef is Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy in action.

*Name has been changed

Key Achievements in 2014:

- Invested an additional $42 million in the **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)** bringing the funding to almost $294 million annually to support municipalities in delivering homelessness programs tailored to the needs of local communities. CHPI helped approximately 33,100 households experiencing homelessness obtain housing and helped approximately 83,800 households at risk of homelessness remain in their homes.
- Signed an extension to the **Canada-Ontario Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement (IAH)**, committing over $400 million in funding over five years for a total of $801 million in combined federal and provincial contributions. As of January 2015, more than 11,400 affordable units are being built across the province for low-and middle-income Ontarians. IAH also provided 12,300 households with rent or down payment assistance.
- Supported **off-reserve Aboriginal housing** under the IAH. As of January 2015, 173 Aboriginal households have received loans to purchase homes, 118 households have benefited from a repair program, and 145 new affordable units have been approved for funding.
- Committed $16 million over three years to create approximately 1,000 supportive housing spaces for people with mental health and addictions issues under phase two of the **Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy**.

Moving Forward:

We are taking an evidence-based approach to finding solutions to address the root causes of homelessness. In early 2015, we appointed an **Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness**, co-chaired by Minister Deb Matthews and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Ted McMeekin. The panel will provide practical advice and expertise to help define homelessness and establish a target to measure homelessness. Based on the panel's advice, the government will develop a plan of action to end homelessness and will report annually on its progress.

Moving forward, we will:

- Update the **Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS)** by 2015-16 to ensure that housing policies are relevant and reflect new research and best practices for preventing and ending homelessness. Updating the LTAHS will be informed by public input and consultations with people who have experienced homelessness or a lack of suitable and affordable housing.
- Continue on our commitment to form a **new mixed-use community in the Athletes' Village** following the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games that will include 253 units of affordable rental housing and up to 100 additional affordable ownership units.
- Support the **Young Parent Resource Centres** across the province in providing services and supports, such as education and housing supports, to vulnerable young parents and their children.
- **Call on the federal government** to play a strong role in supporting social and affordable housing for the long term.

Investments in Affordable Housing: Personal Choice Independent Living

Chen* is a person with a disability living in a newly constructed affordable rental housing unit, funded through the Canada-Ontario Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement.

"Ever since I can remember, I have been dreaming of getting my own apartment. Well here I am, in my own place, sharing it with my wife. Before living here, I spent seven years in a chronic care institution...

"I have been enjoying the comforts of living in my own home. I feel very fortunate to be able to do so."

Chen is Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy in action.

*Name has been changed

A Long-Term Goal to End Homelessness in Ontario

Providing a safe and affordable place to call home is a foundation for families to rise out of poverty.

Updating the **Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy** by **2015-16** to ensure that housing policies reflect new research and best practices for **preventing and ending homelessness**.

As of April 2014, the **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative** has helped **33,100 households** obtain housing and **83,800 households** remain in their homes with an additional investment of $42 million in 2014-15, for a total of almost $294 million.

Committed **$16 million** to create **1,000 new supportive housing spaces** for people with mental health and addiction issues.

Supporting off-reserve **Aboriginal housing**, benefitting **436 households** as of January 2015.

Extended the **Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement**, committing **$400 million** over five years to build and repair more than **11,400 affordable housing** units and provide rent or down payment assistance to **12,300 households**.

Investing in What Works: Using Evidence-Based Social Policy and Measuring Success

Proven Approaches in Alleviating Poverty

"In the current economic and fiscal environment, governments around the world are increasingly adopting evidence-based practices in their policy-making processes.

"It's no surprise – evidence-based programs are not only succeeding in cracking some of societies' toughest challenges, but are also improving resource allocation and generating greater social returns."

– Mowat Centre, School of Public Policy and Governance, University of Toronto

Poverty is a complex issue. Both causes and consequences of poverty are multi-dimensional, and with limited resources we need to be strategic with our investments. That's why our strategy has a dedicated focus on measuring success and investing in programs that work.

Measuring success is at the core of our poverty reduction efforts in Ontario. As part of the focus on evidence, we have been tracking eight indicators through the first strategy:

1. Birth Weights
2. School Readiness (Early Development Instrument)
3. Educational Progress (Combined Grade 3 and 6)
4. High School Graduation Rates
5. Low Income Measure (LIM 50)
6. Depth of Poverty (LIM 40)
7. Ontario Housing Measure
8. Standard of Living

Through our first strategy, we have made progress on all eight indicators. For example, between 2008 and 2014, we made important gains in education, which is a critical contributor to children's and youth success.

- The percentage of children in Grades 3 and 6 that met or exceeded the provincial standards of literacy and numeracy has increased from **67 per cent** to **72 per cent**.
- The percentage of students who have graduated from high school has increased from **79 per cent** to **83 per cent**.
- The percentage of children with the skills and competencies that make them ready for school has increased from **71.5 per cent** to **72.4 per cent**.

We made a positive impact on reducing child poverty, as measured by the Low Income Measure (LIM 50). The child poverty rate fell from 15.2 per cent in 2008 to 13.6 per cent in 2011[1] — helping lift 47,000 children and their families out of poverty and preventing 61,000 children and their families from falling into poverty. We have also made progress in reducing the number of children in deep poverty, from 8.5 per cent in 2008 to 7.7 per cent in 2011, as measured by the Depth of Poverty (LIM 40) indicator. We have achieved this progress during a significant global economic recession that hit Ontario families hard — this is testament to the effectiveness of our efforts in preventing and reducing poverty.

As we move forward with the new strategy, the government remains committed to reducing child poverty. We will continue to measure our progress on the first seven indicators[2] and on the three new indicators to better track the impact of the strategy over time:

1. Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) – tracking the percentage of youth and young adults (aged 15 to 29) who are not in education, employment or training.

2. Long-Term Unemployment – tracking the percentage of working-age Ontarians (aged 25 to 64) who are unemployed for more than six months.

3. Poverty Rates of Vulnerable Populations – tracking the poverty rates of Aboriginal Peoples living off-reserve, newcomers, persons with disabilities, unattached individuals aged 45 to 64, and female lone parents.

We are also working on defining homelessness through the work of the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness. We will develop a definition and establish a target to measure homelessness.

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[1] Currently it is not possible to compare progress in reducing child poverty beyond 2011. Statistics Canada has replaced the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) which collected this information with the new Canadian Income Survey (CIS). Statistics Canada has advised that the CIS results are not comparable to SLID at this point given the methodological difference in data collection.

[2] Changes at Statistics Canada eliminated the survey that carried the Ontario Deprivation Index, making data on the existing Standard of Living indicator inconsistent and likely unavailable in the future. We will continue to measure poverty as accurately as possible through existing and new indicators.

Expanding our indicators will help us better understand which investments are working and where additional efforts are needed so we can deliver programs and services that work for people and target the root causes of poverty.

We recognize the unique and complex form poverty often takes in on-reserve communities and will explore options to best track and measure poverty indicators for both on- and off-reserve Aboriginal Peoples in Ontario as we move forward with the implementation of the strategy.

Having reliable data is critical in our work to prevent and reduce poverty in Ontario. We are continuing to focus on measuring outcomes for people and will continue to call on the federal government to reintroduce important surveys, such as the mandatory long-form census, so that data is available to help us track progress.

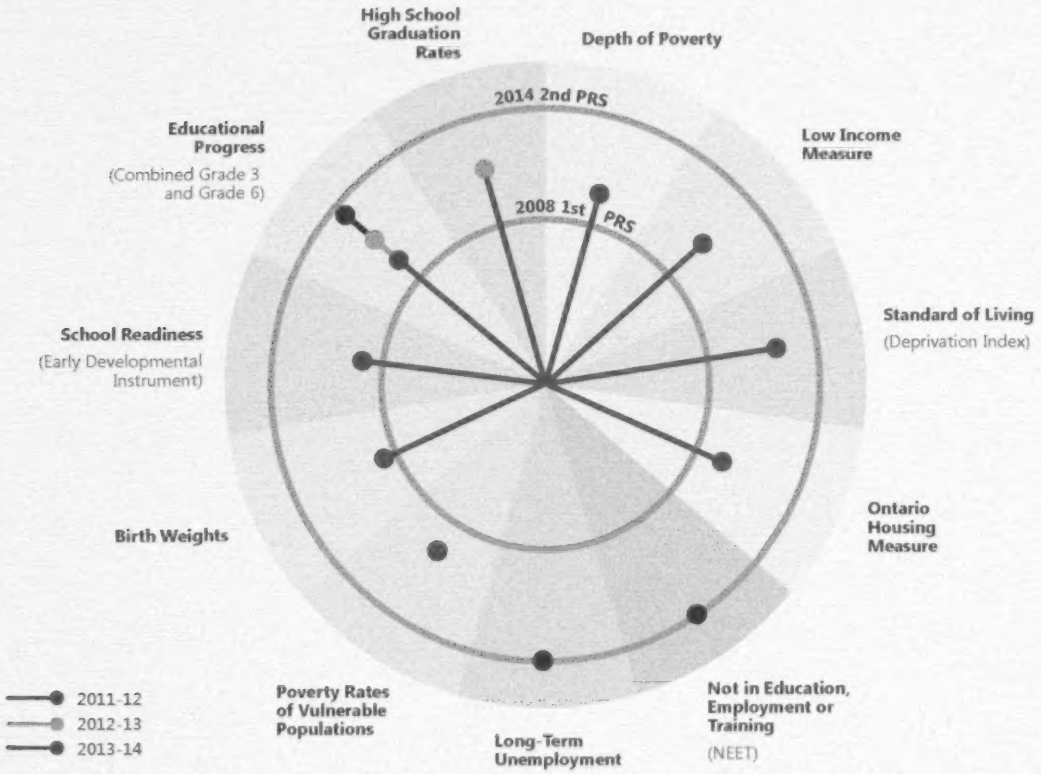
We know that many communities are delivering services that are making a real difference in the lives of vulnerable people. We need to build on what is working. We will continue to focus on investing in programs and services that are proven to work and demonstrate measurable results. That is why our second strategy has a heightened focus on evidence-building.

Moving Forward:

We will be launching a **Local Poverty Reduction Fund** this spring to support, showcase and evaluate local innovative programs that reduce poverty and demonstrate positive outcomes for vulnerable groups. This fund is a critical step towards building a body of evidence and knowledge of effective programs that will inform policy change, lead to more strategic investments and targeted interventions that result in better outcomes for people. We are actively engaging our community partners on the fund to support and mobilize their efforts and promote an integrated partnership approach to its delivery.

We will continue our focus on evidence, building on local innovation and promising trends in other jurisdictions, so that our strategies are outcome-driven and demonstrate tangible results in the lives of vulnerable Ontarians. We will work in partnership at all levels, including with the federal government, to develop new strategies grounded in sound research and evidence, and that address the root causes of poverty.

Tracking Our Progess: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) Indicators



	Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy	Launch of 1st PRS	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five	Launch of 2nd PRS	OVERALL TREND
Higher percentage means progress	**Indicator**	**2008-09**	**2009-10**	**2010-11**	**2011-12**	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-15**	Progress
	Birth Weights*	80%		80.7%					Progress
	School Readiness* (Early Development Instrument)	71.5%		72.4%					Progress
	Educational Progress*** (Combined Grade 3 and Grade 6)	67%	68%	69%	70%	71%	72%		Progress
	High School Graduation Rates	79%	81%	82%	83%	83%			Progress
Lower percentage means progress	**Low Income Measure**	15.2%	14.6%	13.8%	13.6%				Progress
	Depth of Poverty	8.5%	7.3%	7.1%	7.7%				Progress
	Standard of Living** (Deprivation Index)	12.5%	9.1%	10.5%	10.1%				Progress
	Ontario Housing Measure	5.4%	5%	4.2%	5.1%				Progress
	Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)						11.5%	11.7%	
	Long-Term Unemployment						1.8%	1.7%	
	Poverty Rates of Vulnerable Populations				19.4%				

Notes: Updated data not currently available for most indicators. * Reported on a three-year cycle. ** Changes at Statistics Canada have made data for the Standard of Living indicator inconsistent and likely unavailable in the future. *** The results of the Not in Education, Employment or Training indicator have been updated for 2013-14 to reflect data revisions from the Labour Force Survey by Statistics Canada.

Conclusion

Our work to fight poverty is making a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. We have made significant progress but we know there is more to do. We will continue to build on our efforts to help all Ontarians reach their full potential.

As we move forward, we will continue to measure our progress and build evidence about programs and interventions that work. We will work with our community partners to tap into local solutions that are making a real difference in our communities and expand these across the province. Our work to fight poverty can help us overcome our fiscal challenges as people will be healthier, more ready for employment and better able to contribute to their communities.

Ontarians, like all Canadians, expect our governments to work together. We will continue to call for a strong federal partner to be active in our fight against poverty. Examples of intergovernmental collaboration – like the Canada-Ontario Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement – are proven actions that work toward improving the economic well-being and quality of life for vulnerable Ontarians. We will continue to seek federal funding and long-term support in much needed areas of child care, national child care benefits, benefits for working low-income Ontarians, and social and affordable housing. We will continue to call on the federal government to work with Statistics Canada to reintroduce important surveys that provide data to help us track progress.

Our overarching goal is to provide programs and services that work for people, are grounded in sound research and evaluation, demonstrate tangible results and are supported by partnerships and collaboration at all levels. Together, working with our partners, we will continue to reduce poverty and build a better Ontario where everyone can reach their full potential.